

EMPERESS MARIE A POWER BEHIND THE THRONE

Intimate Sketch of a Woman Who Has Long Played an Important Part in Russia

By F. C. LUTHER-OWEN.

NOVEMBER is a fateful month for the Empress Mother of Russia, the woman who enters upon her fifty-ninth year. For not only the anniversary of her birth at Copenhagen but also those of her wedding at Petrograd and of her becoming a widow at Livadia in the Crimea, after twenty-eight years of singularly happy marriage, figure on her calendar for November.

No woman now living can be said to have played a more important role in the history of Europe, and yet few women of her rank have been more misunderstood, especially abroad. This is largely due to intentional misrepresentation on the part of the court and Government of Berlin, which has seen in her ever since she first went to Petrograd as a barely nineteen-year-old bride an adversary of Russian policies and interests. As I stated in these columns on Sunday last, most Muscovite news reaches the outer world by way of Berlin, where it is colored to suit the views of the palace on the Wilhelmstrasse, the activities of the censorship on the banks of the Neva having contributed in no small measure to facilitate the task of the Kaiser's Government in damaging people and conditions in Russia in the eyes of Western nations.

The object of Russian statecraft in this matter is to give the world as little more than passing mention, namely, so to prejudice Western nations against Russia as completely to alienate them and to render her therefore dependent in a political and more especially in an economic sense exclusively upon Germany. Of course, the Government of the Czar has often laid itself open to the criticism of the outer world by the adoption of measures which foreigners, in their ignorance of Muscovite conditions, were unable to judge correctly or to understand. No Government, not even that of the United States, is exempt from criticism. But it is well to bear in mind that most of those particular stories concerning Russia that have excited criticism against her have come to us from tainted sources and through poisoned channels, namely, from Berlin.

Aware that foreign nations have always favored the inauguration of liberal reforms in Russia, Berlin has ever made a point of holding up in obloquy Empress Marie as the dominant influence of reaction in the land of the Czar. She has been portrayed in lurid colors as the chief obstacle to popular forms of government and as the most ardent champion of autocracy.

Every administrative act of the authorities at Petrograd calculated to Russify Poland, the German speaking provinces of the empire and Finland and to restrain their nationalistic tendencies toward democracy has been laid at her door. She has been depicted as a fanatic in religious matters and as having been the instigator of alleged persecutions of the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches at the dominions, and to her has been attributed the responsibility for almost every anti-Semitic disturbance.

Nothing can be further from the truth, and if she has been thus calumniated, it has been solely and entirely due to the fact that she has always been openly and avowedly the ally of the Prussians, and more particularly of the Hohenzollerns.

Born and reared as a Princess of the Danes, who are perhaps the most democratic people of all Europe—a people whose liberalism is so advanced a character that they throw on all titles of nobility and orders of knighthood and refuse to recognize any differences of birth and rank—she has ever since her marriage been the most intimate friend and confidante of her favorite sister, Queen Alexandra, the sympathy of their tastes and of their views in all matters being such as is usually only to be found in the case of twins. She has along had a pronounced predilection for everything English, and since becoming a widow, more than two decades ago, has made a point of spending a considerable portion of each year, that is to say, whole months together, in England, keenly enjoying English life and regarding herself almost as beloved there as her sister, Queen Alexandra.

Even prior to her husband's accession to the throne most of the servants of her Antioch Palace at Petrograd and of her country houses at Gatchina were English. English was the principal language spoken in her domestic circle there. Most of the furniture of the more intimate apartments of her various residences was English, and her children were entrusted to the care, first of English nurses and then of English governesses. Moreover, she always entertained a very warm affection for her brother-in-law, King Edward, whom she regarded as the most sagacious of counselors, not only by reason of his extensive knowledge of international relations and conditions, but more particularly as a man of the world of altogether exceptional experience.

This being the case, it is ridiculous to describe her as so prejudiced against the democratic principles and which she had been reared in Denmark and against the liberal principles which she always so warmly admired in England as to oppose liberalism in every shape and form in Russia or to champion the cause there of reaction. Far from being averse to the popular reforms of one kind or another, inaugurated by her eldest son, the present Emperor, and with which his reign will at all times be identified in the pages of history, she has encouraged him therein and has accorded him her support, merely stipulating that the reforms should be of a gradual and progressive nature rather than of a too sudden character. In this she was in full accord with the advice of her brother-in-law, King Edward, and of the most able of her advisors, both at Petrograd and abroad, who felt convinced that changes of a too startling kind, for which the people in Russia were neither prepared nor ripe, might defeat their own object and result in revolution.

The real adversaries of liberalism and of popular forms of government in Russia have been the members of the bureaucracy, men for the most part of German parentage or ancestry, and who, by persistent and systematic efforts, have endeavored to implant in themselves to prefer the inter-

of the land of their adoption. At Berlin it was realized that as long as Muscovite yearnings for popular forms of government and for liberal institutions were repressed there would be national unrest in the land of the Czar, and that unrest, especially if judiciously fostered through Teuton and hyphenated agencies, would furnish so much ground for preoccupation to the Government at Petrograd as to render it apprehensive of trouble with any foreign power, especially with Germany.

That is why the Russian bureaucracy, largely recruited from sources of German origin, has always, in obedience to hints from Berlin, fought the liberalism of Emperor Nicholas, and of his mother, in his dominions, and why it put every conceivable obstacle in their way, short of flagrant disobedience and open defiance. In fact, it was not until Nicholas, realizing this, commenced to exclude the German and hyphenated elements from all ranks of the Government administration, particularly from the higher offices, which they had to a great extent monopolized, that the reforms which he had decreed, largely at the instance of his mother, commenced to take shape and to receive bona fide execution.

The present war will complete Russia's riddance of the German blight, which has ever been an insidious obstacle to her political and economic development, and its disappearance will leave the road absolutely free and unobstructed to all those projects of reform which the Emperor and his mother have in view, and which Nicholas longs to bring about before he is called upon to lay down the crushing burden of rulership and to seek rest with his fathers in the mausoleum church of St. Peter and St. Paul, at the mouth of the Neva.

In Finland, too, Empress Marie has always sought to alleviate the lot of the people there, instead of being, as the Germans, responsible for the restrictive measures inaugurated in the grand duchy. She has never forgotten the fact that her honeymoon was spent in Finland, and that some of the happiest days of her married life were when she went off with her husband and children several times a year, cruising in Finnish waters, landing at all sorts of picturesque spots, to picnic and to enjoy the scenery, getting into intimate and friendly relations with the people.

Two or three years ago Nicholas had succeeded to the throne he found that the Germans had taken advantage of the complete autonomy enjoyed by the grand duchy to carry on a very active anti-Russian propaganda, and to establish themselves in all the various seaports and centres of industry in such a fashion as to secure not merely a predominant influence but an actual control of the political and economic life of Finland. This discovery caused the Emperor to lend a willing ear to those of his advisers who argued with him that it would be better to Russify the grand duchy than to permit it to become wholly German, and so he gave his consent to measures which increased the authority of the Petrograd Government in Finland at the expense of her autonomy.

Opposition thereto on the part of the Finns led to further restrictive measures, and it was toward the close of the reign of Nicholas that the Emperor, who had acquired the most evil renown for the harshness with which he enforced this policy, were officials who bore German names, indicative of the Teuton blood in their veins. The only member of the imperial family who shared their views was the late Grand Duke Sergius, who was, it must be confessed, disposed to ultraconservatism rather than to liberalism and opposed to any concession to the nationalist aspirations of the Finns. But after his assassination the Emperor, largely at the instance of his mother, inaugurated a far more conciliatory policy toward the Finnish subjects and directed the new Governor-General, Prince Obolenski, whom he had appointed for the purpose, to suspend the execution of the most unpopular



Dowager Empress Marie of Russia.

of the measures that had been ordered, namely, the decree making it compulsory for the Finnish recruits to take the oath of allegiance to Nicholas, as Autocrat of All the Russias, instead of as Grand Duke of Finland, and, worse still, rendering them liable to serve in Russian regiments, under Russian regimental officers, outside of Finland, instead of serving in purely Finnish regiments, commanded by officers of their own race, and only called upon to serve beyond the borders of the grand duchy in the event of war.

Other concessions made by the Emperor were the reestablishment of the autonomy of the judges in Finland and the repeal of the decree rendering them liable to summary dismissal by the Governor-General or the Russian Government in case they incurred the displeasure of either the Emperor or the Emperor's mother. It is thanks to this and to other favors granted by Nicholas, at the instance of his mother, that the Finns, that the latter have not only fought with such splendid bravery against the Germans in Poland and in the present campaign, but have also given the Swedes and their Teuton friends thoroughly to understand that any attempt of invasion of the Grand Duchy by the Germans alone, or in conjunction with the Swedes, under the pretext of liberating it from Muscovite rule, would be vigorously resisted by the entire people of Finland, as loyal and devoted subjects of the Czar.

As to the charges of anti-Semitism brought against Empress Marie, it would merely point out that she has been the first Czarina to receive mem-

bers of the Jewish race at the Court of Petrograd, while the imputation of hostility to the Catholic Church is disproved by the fact that no one can boast of having been admitted to a greater degree of intimate friendship by herself and by her husband than the fine old Polish noble, Zdzislawski.

Perhaps the best proof that Empress Marie has never been regarded as an obstacle to liberal reform in Russia, where assuredly her true character is far better known than abroad, is to be found in the remarkable immunity which she, like her son Nicholas II, has always enjoyed from attempts upon her life. They have seen all sorts and conditions of statesmen and great dignitaries of the crown struck down by the hands of revolutionary assassins. The Empress Marie has even played the part of a martyr, being the only member of the imperial family who has escaped without serious injury from the top of a steep embankment, into a field below, three of the servants, who were engaged in waiting upon them at dinner, being killed on the spot.

The only attack ever made upon Empress Marie occurred not in Russia, but in Denmark, three years prior to her marriage, and when she was but 16 years of age. It was in 1861, during the progress of the Prussian invasion of Denmark, which resulted in the latter's loss of her Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. Prussia, in accordance with her customary methods, organized popular disturbances in the streets of Copenhagen, with the object of embarrassing the Danish Government and of compelling it to abandon all further resistance.

It was one of these mobs which, after smashing the windows of the royal palace, happened to encounter

in a nearby thoroughfare the carriage in which the late King Christian was driving with his daughter, who then bore the name of Dagmar, and commenced pelting the royal equipage with stones. One of them, a sharp flint, struck the young Princess on the forehead, cutting a deep gash, of which the scar remains to this day—a scar for which she has always held the Prussians rather than the people of Copenhagen responsible.

She exchanged her name of Dagmar for Marie on the occasion of her conversion to the Orthodox Greek Church and of her wedding at Petrograd. Her marriage may be said to have been contracted under the very shadow of death. For Princess Dagmar had been previously betrothed to her husband's elder brother, the Czarovitch Nicholas Alexandrovitch. He succumbed to an affection of the lungs within a few weeks of the date appointed for the wedding, and when his fiancée was summoned in haste from Copenhagen to his deathbed in Nice he placed her hand in that of his favorite brother, Alexander, and directed them, as his last wish and prayer, to marry one another.

The union thus arranged developed in course of time into a full fledged love match, and it may be asserted without any fear of denial that there has never been any royal or imperial couple in Europe whose relations to one another were so completely free from any cloud and so ideally happy throughout their near thirty years of union. Empress Marie quickly learned to love and admire the sound and sterling honesty of her huge and burly husband and was wholly wrapped up in him, never leaving him and acting as his guardian angel. Her affection and devotion were returned with interest by Alexander, who, it is no exaggeration to state, literally idolized his wife until the very last.

It might be imagined that a woman who has played so important a political role and who has exercised so remarkable an influence upon the reigns of two successive autocrats of all the Russias would be masterful in her ways and masculine in her manner. Yet no Empress of Russia, or of any other country, has ever been more essentially feminine. Until she lost her husband one of her greatest passions, next to music, was dancing. Indeed, she was not only the most graceful, but also the most indefatigable of waiters and marksmen.

This became known abroad, and in course of time the great Powers began to accredit to the court of Petrograd only the very best dancers of their diplomatic service in the hope that their envoys, or even the secretaries of their missions, by becoming a favorite partner of the Empress at state balls might in that way secure good will for their country at the court. In the society and in the Government circles of Petrograd, it would be bold to assert that Empress Marie ever permitted herself or her husband to be influenced in a political sense in this fashion. At the same time it cannot be denied that throughout the reign of Alexander III, and even before his accession to the throne, she selected for her preference her partners from among the nimble footed members of the embassy of France.

Her preference for France, however, and the role which she played in securing the alliance of that country with Russia, was due in the main to her hatred for Prussia, a hatred dating from the Prussian invasion of Denmark in 1864, and to a prejudice against everything German; also to the conviction which she acquired before she had been very long at Petrograd that Teuton influences, then dominant in Russia, were intentionally detrimental to the best interests of the land of her adoption. Nor was she satisfied with bringing about the alliance between Russia and France; she never rested until eight years ago she succeeded in bringing Great Britain within the sphere of the agreement, resulting in a tripartite alliance. It is this alliance, known as the Triple Entente, which is championing in the present war the cause of liberalism and of civil freedom against militarism and the most despot forms of Caesarism.

The manner in which Empress Marie is regarded in Germany, where she was treated with the most brutal insult, she was subjected, along with her sister, Queen Alexandra, not long ago in the columns of one of the leading organs of the Teuton press, namely, the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, which had until then enjoyed a reputation for moderation and for conservatism in its utterances and which is credited with official inspiration. The *Frankfurter Zeitung* describes Empress Marie and Queen Alexandra as "the moving spirits and principal authors of the international conspiracy against Germany."

It asserted that it was their "influence which 'Nicholas II. has been reversing the pro-German policy of his father and to commit Russia definitely to a course directed against Germany, and to even go to the length of allying himself with republican France in pursuance of these views." It declared that "Nicholas II. has been even still more completely dominated in an anti-German sense by these two royal ladies, his mother, Empress Marie, and his aunt, Queen Alexandra." The article called attention to the fact that as long as Queen Victoria reigned the relations between the courts of St. James's and Berlin were very close, and those of the German and English Governments and people very friendly, but that as soon as King Edward had recovered from the grief of his wife's death, he had turned to the throne he allowed himself to be influenced by his wife and by his sister-in-law to abandon the pro-German policy of his mother and proceeded not only to throw himself into the arms of Russia and France in every way, but also to related to the antagonism of Germany to Russia, a step which was from her Triple Alliance with Austria and Germany, and to stir up animosity in Japan, in Scandinavia, in Spain, in Belgium and in the Balkans against everything Teuton.

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On August 16 Abram Voronkov bought potatoes from a peasant who was standing in front of his home with a wagon load. He paid the Pole's gulden and started for home with the sack over his shoulders. A mob fell upon him and beat him, demanding that he return the potatoes to the peasant. They shouted: "There is nothing here for Jews, only for Catholics. Let the Jews buy from the Germans." Voronkov tried to resist. Schultz answered quickly that he was doing the best he could.

The militiaman left but returned in a few moments and arrested Schultz, declaring that he had no right to give him such an answer. When Schultz asked permission to go into the house to get his hat the militiaman, together with three others, dragged him out of the courtyard and beat him cruelly. They tortured him all the way to the station, where he was confined behind bars.

On August 5 Itzhok Golombak was stopped by a militiaman. He had committed no offence, but the previous year he had had some misunderstanding with a militiaman named Blawicki, who now demanded his arrest. The Jew was taken to the station, where he was locked up from 9 o'clock in the morning until 2 in the afternoon. He was sentenced to receive ten lashes. One of the Judges decreased the punishment to three lashes. He was stretched out and a militiaman gave him the blows. The previous Friday Golombak's grandmother, who is 80, had been taken to the hospital by a Pole that she had incited several peasants to steal onions. The gray haired grandmother received three lashes too.

Israel Gleichman and Itzhok Sattman tried to buy bread and other supplies in the store of the citizens' committee of 71 Zelazna strasse. Despite the fact that they lived in the same quarter they were not allowed to buy bread and were told frankly that Jews could not deal there.

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JEWES OF WARSAW ILL TREATED BY THE GERMAN INVADERS

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hour later the militiamen returned through a rear door and drew up a report that Brukiew had sold goods through the streets of his store. Brukiew refused to sign the statement because he was innocent of the charge.

He turned away from the men, put on his prayer shawl and phylacteries and began to say his prayers. Not long after his militiamen entered the room ordered him to accompany them to the station, declaring that he had called them thieves. Brukiew denied the charge but promised to go to the station as soon as he finished his prayers. The militiamen, however, would not listen to him. They pulled off his prayer shawl and phylacteries, tore his clothes and dragged him off to the station.

Abraham Rawinski of 81 Dzika strasse spent some time watching the method of distributing food supplies in the store of the Citizens' Committee in Gensla strasse.

The customers were placed in line according to their possessions. It began to rain and the Jews, who had been separated from the Jews, and that the latter might not see what the Poles received. The authorities refused to sell many of the Jews the most necessary food supplies—bread, flour, etc.—or else they gave them the minimum portion.

When the store closed all the Poles had already received their supplies, but a number of Jews had to leave without any food. Then the authorities always sold the Poles much larger portions than the Jews. They might have enough over Sunday. But they never allowed the Jews to buy any more on Friday for the Sabbath than on other days.

The widow Poria Fuhrzeig of 27 Pasa Miodowa was approached by a Jew who was an active member of the militia. He demanded rent from Frau Fuhrzeig. The widow gave him two rubles, although she usually paid him three rubles a week. She had not the means of livelihood and was the sole support of her children and herself, so she was not in a position to pay more.

On Saturday Burewski came a second time and demanded money again. Frau Fuhrzeig was not at home, but her daughter, Freundla, 17 years old, received him and asked him to wait for the rest of the rent until they were able to earn a little more money. Burewski answered her with blows. Just then her mother arrived, and when she asked Burewski why he was striking her daughter Burewski answered roughly: "If you don't keep quiet I'll kill you all." And he turned on his heel.

The next day Frau Fuhrzeig's older daughter, Sima, met Burewski and asked him why he had beaten her sister. He answered her brutally: "I will arrest you for such a question."

On Sunday evening he appeared at the home of Frau Fuhrzeig and arrested the affianced husband of her daughter, Schlomo and Moshe Kleimann. At the station he de-

clared that the two girls he brought there, and when they arrived he arrested them.

On Monday morning Frau Fuhrzeig went to the office of the Commissioner and explained the whole situation to him. But Burewski came in at the same time, called the Commissioner's attention to the matter and threatened her with arrest. The Commissioner told the woman to go home because she could accomplish nothing. Her daughters remained under arrest.

Herr Rubinlicht reported the case of a Jewish girl from 20 to 22 years old who had been dragged down into the cellar of a station house, brutally beaten and locked up. Through the window Herr Rubinlicht saw one of the militiamen holding her down with his foot while another was hitting her on the head. The girl fainted from the blows and they had considerable difficulty reviving her. Rubinlicht protested against the outrage to the Commissioner, who merely answered that he would see that such incidents were not repeated.

Herr Rubinlicht also saw the militiamen beat Frau Grungas at the station.

On August 7 Abraham Frohns was on his way home with his mother. As he approached Somkowska strasse he encountered a crowd of people. A militiaman was trying to disperse the crowd and ordered him to move more quickly. Frohns with despair thought he would do so but his mother could not. The militiaman answered that he would arrest Frohns. The latter resisted and was pushed through the crowd. He hid himself behind a gate. The militiaman detained his mother and started to take her to the station. Her husband, Simon Frohns, heard her cries and came to her rescue. The militiaman wanted to arrest him for his interference, but Frohns turned and fled. They overtook him and beat him cruelly. The elder Frohns then said he would go of his own accord to the station if the German soldiers would command him to do so. The latter arrived and immediately arrested him, his wife and his son Schlomo.

One of Frohns's friends by the name of Schlachter went to the station and